

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
and
the CITY OF WILLMAR, MINNESOTA

PROJECT MEMORANDUM

SP 175-090-005
Minn Proj. No. ZZZ XXXX (XXX)

DOWNTOWN-ROBBINS ISLAND CONNECTION TRAIL
FROM: *the intersection of First Street and Litchfield Avenue*
TO: *the southern boundary of Robbins Island Park*
OVER: *BNSF Railroad on the existing First Street Bridge*
IN THE CITY OF: *Willmar*

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT: Construction of $\frac{3}{4}$ mile bituminous trail; widening of pedestrian/bicycle sidewalk on First Street Bridge; reconstruction of Ella Avenue intersection to improve non-motorized trail crossing; and native savannah restoration within project limits.

Recommended:

Holly B. Wilson, P.E.
City of Willmar Public Works Director

Date

Reviewed and Recommended:

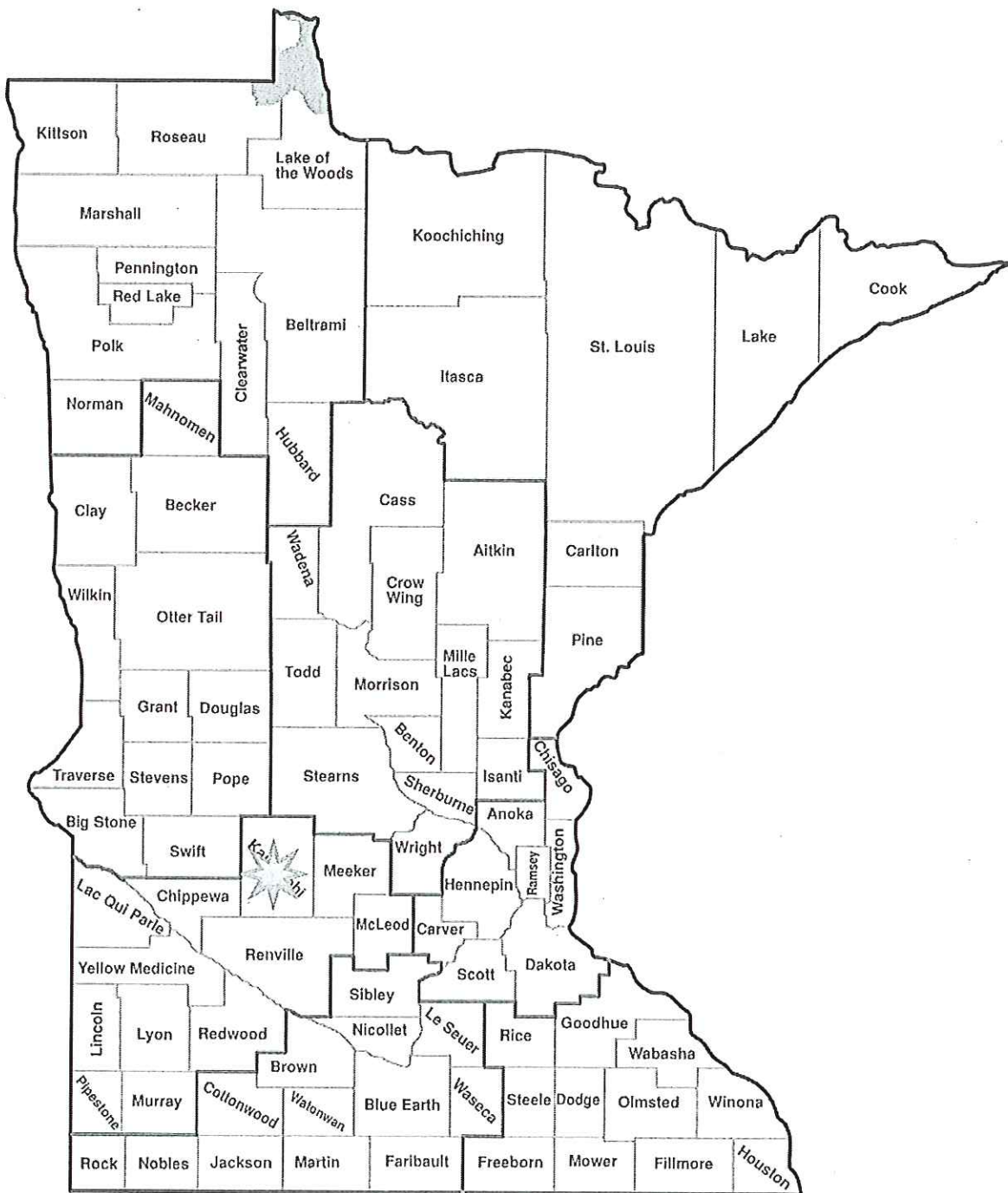
Melvin Odens, P.E.
District 8 State Aid Engineer

Date

Approved:

State Aid Engineer
State Aid For Local Transportation

Date



STATE MAP

Location Map to follow State Map

Identify the entire highway section.

Identify the begin & end of the project.

Include project number.

Include old & new bridge numbers.

Show at least one incorporated city.

Show township & range.

Label all roads & facilities referred to in the document.

Show parks, public wildlife refuges, public golf courses, wild & scenic rivers & historic properties, etc.

Show railroads.

If trail project, show trail system.

Graphics clear and readable

PROJECT LOCATION MAP

I. REPORT PURPOSE

This Project Memorandum (PM) documents the need for the proposed improvement, environmental impacts and mitigation, and schedule, funding and design information.

This documentation was prepared to demonstrate that the project does not have a significant environmental effect and is excluded from the requirement to prepare an EA or EIS in accordance with 23 CFR 771.115.

Project Manager:

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Title Willmar City Engineer
Address 333 6th Street SW, Willmar, MN 56201
Phone 320-235-4913
Fax 320-235-4917
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Preparer:

Name Adam Arvidson
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Phone 612-968-9298
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II. HIGHWAY SECTION DESCRIPTION

The trail will generally parallel First Street (Business Highway 71), on the existing bridge (no. 34524) over BNSF railroad tracks and within public parkland owned by the City of Willmar. The entire trail corridor will run within public right-of-way or within city-owned lands. The trail will replace a degraded asphalt trail in roughly the same location, and will improve the roadway crossing at Ella Avenue, by relocating the crossing to the intersection of Ella and First Street, providing an accessible route across the intersection, and providing pedestrian-actuated signals.

Highway Section Termini:

From: the northwest quadrant of the intersection of First Street and Litchfield Avenue
To: the southern boundary of Robbins Island Park, a city park
Length: 1 mile

Unusual Traffic or Road / Facility Use: none

Horizontal/Vertical Alignment:

Most of the trail corridor is flat, with the exception of the First Street bridge. The bridge sloped upward from the Litchfield (southern) end, and slopes downward toward the north. The Ella Avenue intersection is elevated above the surrounding park landscape. The trail will run on a new embankment descending from this intersection to the existing grade in the park below.

Adjacent Land Use:

For nearly its entire length, the trail runs within a public park lying between First Street and Foot Lake. The landscape is currently mown turf with some large trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants at the lake edge. The First Street Bridge crosses a BNSF switching yard with multiple tracks. At the southern terminus of the trail, at the foot of the bridge, surrounding land uses include downtown commercial businesses.

Bridge Crossing(s):

Bridge number: 34524

Location: The trail will cross a BNSF switching yard on the existing First Street Bridge. The bridge will be modified in the following ways:

- The existing pedestrian sidewalk will be widened by a total of four feet into the vehicular roadway, into excess vehicular roadway surface created by a re-stripping of the traveled lanes (not part of this project).
- This trailway extension will consist of colored concrete to contrast with the existing grey concrete and create a visual buffer adjacent the traveled lanes. The new concrete will be raised 8 inches above the roadway surface, to match the existing sidewalk.
- There will be no modifications outside of the existing bridge edge.

Railroad Crossing Location (s):

The only railroad crossing within 600 feet of the project is the crossing of the BNSF switching yard on the existing First Street Bridge (described above).

Airport Proximity: No

III. PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

Purpose/Objectives:

This project will close one of the last two gaps in a nearly 25-mile multi-jurisdictional trail corridor. When complete, this corridor will allow all who use downtown Willmar to easily access Willmar's lakes, the MinnWest Technology Campus, Willmar High School, several northern neighborhoods, the Glacial Lakes State Trail, and the Kandiyohi County lake country towns of Spicer, New London, and Hawick.

Need/Deficiencies:

As stated in Willmar's Comprehensive Plan, trails "are not only becoming more crucial for recreation, but also for citywide transportation. All City paths/trails should be interconnected." This project will allow for safe pedestrian and bicycle traffic between the downtown area, residential areas north of the railroad tracks, and the city's lakeside system of parks.

Specifically, this project will address several safety and deficiency problems in the non-motorized connection between downtown and Robbins Island Park:

- The existing asphalt trail between Ella Avenue and the park is severely degraded and has reached the end of its useful life. This project will reconstruct this portion of the trail and widen the facility from the existing 8-feet to 10-feet
- Currently, the trail crossing of Ella Avenue occurs in a mid-block situation with somewhat poor visibility. This project will move the Ella Avenue crossing to the Ella Avenue / First Street intersection and provide accessible pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, such as curb ramps and pedestrian-actuated signals.
- The First Street Bridge currently features an 8-foot sidewalk with no edge protection. This project will widen the total sidewalk width to 12-feet.

IV. ALTERNATIVES

No Build Alternative

This alternative would not accomplish the goals of the Willmar Comprehensive Plan and the Willmar Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and would not correct deficiencies in the current key trail connection between downtown and the north side of Willmar.

Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative follows an existing trail route, while making improvements to that route. This route is the shortest and most efficient connection between downtown and Robbins Island Park, which is a portion of a longer, substantially complete trail corridor connecting downtown to the Glacial Lakes State Trail. Asphalt surface was selected north of the First Street Bridge, since this is the most affordable solution and also provides an expected trail experience. In addition, some of the existing trail's aggregate base and asphalt can be re-used in the new trail. On the First Street Bridge the existing surface is concrete, so the widening of the pathway will also be concrete to provide a consistent surface.

Other Reasonable Location or Design Alternatives:

One other connection between the downtown area and the northern part of town was considered. This corridor runs farther east and appears on Department of Natural Resources maps as the local trail connection to the

Glacial Lakes State Trail. This route would use local streets to access an existing pedestrian bridge over the railroad, then follow High Avenue, Lakeland Drive, and Civic Center Drive to the existing trailhead. This corridor was not preferred for several reasons:

- Due to right-of-way constraints on local streets south of the railroad, it would be impossible to construct a separated trail, which is critical for a trail linkage of this importance.
- Crossings of First Street and TH 12 near downtown would be required. Both are busy roadways with at least four lanes. It would be difficult to provide a safe and easily useable pedestrian and bicycle crossings.
- The existing pedestrian bridge does not meet accessibility requirements—the approaches have slopes in excess of 5% and do not provide landings.
- This route is less direct than the preferred option. It would require the traveling public to travel farther to the east and then back west to access the lakeside parks. Because there is an existing trail in the preferred corridor, it is likely users would continue to choose the preferred corridor over this alternative.

V. PROJECT COST, FUNDING & SCHEDULE

Estimate of Cost:

Roadway Costs: \$108,731

Bridge/Culvert Bridge Costs: \$30,000 for bridge sidewalk widening

Total: \$138,731

Anticipated Funding:

Type and amount of Federal and matching funds:

Federal: \$ 135,064 TEA

State Aid: n/a

Other State: n/a

Local: \$ 48,668 (includes design and construction match)

The project is in the 2012-2013 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Federal fiscal year 2013, Sequence # 1373

Estimated cost shown in STIP: \$ 177,017 (total cost has been reduced from the original grant application, due to elimination of the bridge railing and replacement of that line item with the widened sidewalk).

Federal funding shown in STIP: \$ 135,064.

Anticipated Schedule

Public Hearing, if any	n/a
Project Memorandum	July, 2012
Right-of-Way Acquisition	n/a
Plans, Specifications & Estimate	June-September, 2012
Letting	March, 2013

Future Stages Or Improvements: none

VI. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL (SEE) IMPACTS

Section 4(f) Of The Transportation Act Of 1966

The proposed project impacts Robbins Island and Foot Lake Parks. The proposed project is an independent bikeway/walkway project covered by the bikeway/walkway Negative Declaration statement.

See attached written approval from the official having direct jurisdiction over the Section 4(f) property.

Section 6(f) Of The Land And Water Conservation Fund Act Of 1965

The project will not impact Section 6(f) lands or properties.

Section 106 Of The National Historic Preservation Act Of 1966

It has been determined that no historic properties eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by the project.

See attached letter from the Mn/DOT's Cultural Resources Unit (CRU).

Endangered Species Act Of 1973

The proposed action occurs in a county with no known federally listed endangered, threatened, proposed or candidate species, or final or proposed critical habitat. In addition, the proposed action does not have the potential for influence outside of Kandiyohi County.

As a result, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Office of Environmental Services acting as the nonfederal representative for the Federal Highway Administration has made a determination of "NO Effect", completing the consultation requirements defined in Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

Right-Of-Way

The project will require no permanent right of way acquisitions, no permanent or temporary easements, no changes in access, and no relocation.

Hazardous Materials

Potential for impacts from contaminated properties has been considered, but because of the project location and nature of the planned work, there is little potential for encountering contaminated materials. Any potentially contaminated materials encountered during construction will be handled and treated in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations.

Farmland Protection Policy Act Of 1981

The project will not involve the acquisition of farmland.

Air Quality

The project will not significantly impact air quality.

Highway Traffic Noise

The project is not a Type 1 project. Procedures for the abatement of highway traffic noise do not apply in accordance with 23 CFR 772.

Construction Noise

Construction noise has been considered and no impact is anticipated. Night construction activities are not anticipated.

Floodplain Management

The project will include non-significant floodplain encroachment. The provisions of Executive Order 11988 have been complied with.

The trail will pass through an Unnumbered Zone A floodplain, as mapped by the National Flood Insurance Program. This floodplain is associated with Foot Lake and includes land adjacent to the lake extending to the Business Highway 71 right-of-way. The trail will pass longitudinally through this floodplain for approximately ¼ mile.

The following is a brief assessment of floodplain impacts, based on the four issues identified in Mn/DOT's Floodplain Assessment worksheet.

1. *There is no significant potential for interruption of a transportation facility which is needed for emergency vehicles or provides a community's only evacuation route.*

The planned facility is a non-motorized trail and does not impact roadways in any way.

2. *There is no significant impact on natural and beneficial floodplain values.*

The current character of the floodplain includes mown turfgrass with a narrow fringe of emergent and shrub vegetation at the lake edge. This project will replace a degraded trail with a new trail, in roughly the same corridor, and will therefore have no impact on the natural value of the floodplain. In addition, the entire trail corridor will be restored to a native savanna landscape, which will increase the natural and beneficial value of the floodplain by reducing runoff and pollutants entering the lake and by increasing habitat for insects, and birds.

3. *There is no significant increased risk of flooding.*

This floodplain is associated with a 500-acre lake that is connected to 632-acre Willmar Lake. In the context of that water volume, the trail is an extremely minor encroachment into the floodplain and will have no measurable effect on flooding. This is especially true since there is an existing trail in the floodplain. In addition, because the trail will pass through the extreme outer edge of the floodplain, it will not disrupt any water flows within the lake basins.

4. *The project will not support and/or result in incompatible floodplain development.*

The purpose of this project is to provide a transportation and recreational trail connecting downtown to Robbins Island Park and to other trails leading north. The floodplain discussed here is owned by the city and operated as a public park. Therefore, the upgrading of a park trail is a use wholly compatible with the floodplain and will not in any way lead to additional development of any kind in the floodplain.

Wetland Protection

The project will not impact or encroach into a wetland.

Section 404 Of The Clean Water Act

The project will not involve placement of fill into waters of the U.S. (defined in 33CFR 328).

Water Pollution / MPCA--NPDES

The construction activities will disturb 1 or more acre of land area (including clearing, grading, & excavation). A Phase II NPDES permit is required. The permit will be submitted to Mn/DOT State Aid prior to project authorization, and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be included in the construction plan package.

This project will increase the existing impervious surface area and associated runoff. This is primarily due to the widening of the existing trail from 8 feet to 10 feet. This increase will be mitigated by through the restoration of a native savanna along the length of the trail will include grading to prevent any trail-related stormwater from entering adjacent waters.

Controversial Issues

The project is not anticipated to be controversial.

Environmental Justice

The purpose of Executive Order 12898 is to identify, address, and avoid disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low income populations. Based on a field review of the project area, and discussions with City officials, it has been determined that there are no minority or low income populations within the project area. Therefore, there are no Environmental Justice concerns on this project.

State Environmental Review (MEQB)

The project does not meet the mandatory EAW threshold and does not have potential for significant environmental effects.

Federal Action Determination Statement

Based on the environmental study in accordance with 23 CFR 771.117, it is determined that the proposed improvement is a Class II Action (categorical exclusion) anticipated to have no foreseeable change on the quality of the human environment.

VII. AGENCY COORDINATION (Not covered in the "SEE" impact section above)

Municipal Approval: Willmar City Council approved federal grant submission in September, 2008. Local match added to Willmar CIP as part of the 2013 budget process. Project Memorandum approved TBD.

Permits Required			
Agency	REQ'D	Status / Date Received	Attached
USACE Section 404	N		n/a
Coast Guard	N		n/a
DNR--Water	N		n/a
DNR--Public Waters	N		n/a
MPCA--NPDES	Y	To be applied for upon completion of construction plans	N
MPCA--Section 401	N		n/a
Watershed District	N		n/a
Wetland Conservation Act / BSWR	N		n/a

Railroad	N		n/a
Other	N		n/a

VIII. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A better connection between downtown Willmar and the lakes north of the railroad tracks has been a key feature of downtown planning since the initial downtown public open houses were held in 2005. The project, therefore, has never been controversial, and has been repeatedly supported by the general public, most recently at the public open houses, community roundtable meetings, and City Council public hearing associated with the Willmar Downtown Plan update. These public input opportunities took place between November, 2011, and May, 2012 and involved more than 100 residents. This trail segment, as a portion of the ultimate extension of the Glacial Lakes State Trail into downtown Willmar, was included in the Downtown Plan.

In addition, the City Council convened a public hearing when considering the transportation enhancements grant application in late 2008. No comments were made at this hearing, and the City Council approved the grant application.

IX. DESIGN STUDY

The project will be designed in accordance with the FHWA-Mn/DOT Stewardship Plan. For this project, the following design standards are applicable:

8820.9995 State Aid Minimum Bicycle Path Standards

Mn/DOT LRFD Bridge Design Manual

Mn/DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual, March 2007.

Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MMUTCD)

AASHTO Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, July 2004

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The project will be constructed in accordance with the current edition of the Minnesota Department of Transportation's "Standard Specifications for Construction", including all Supplemental Specifications.

Geometric Design Elements

Segment Termini: From: intersection of First Street and Litchfield Avenue To: southern boundary of Robbins Island Park

Bike Path Type	Off-road	Off-road	
	Two Way	One Way	
	Multi Use	Multi Use	
Path Width, ft	10'	10'	
Path Surfacing	asphalt	Concrete (on bridge)	
Shoulder Width, ft	2'	2'	
Shoulder Surfacing	aggregate	concrete	
Clear Zone, ft	2'	2' (shoulder)	
Inslope, rise:run	3:1	n/a (on bridge)	
Design Speed, mph	20 mph	20 mph	
Maximum Grade, %	5%	5%	
Vertical Clearance, ft	10' min.	10' min.	
<i>Attach Path Typical Section</i>			
Design Exceptions required: N	Location:		
	Exception Requested:		

X. TRAFFIC DURING CONSTRUCTION

Construction on the bridge will likely require closure of one southbound lane.

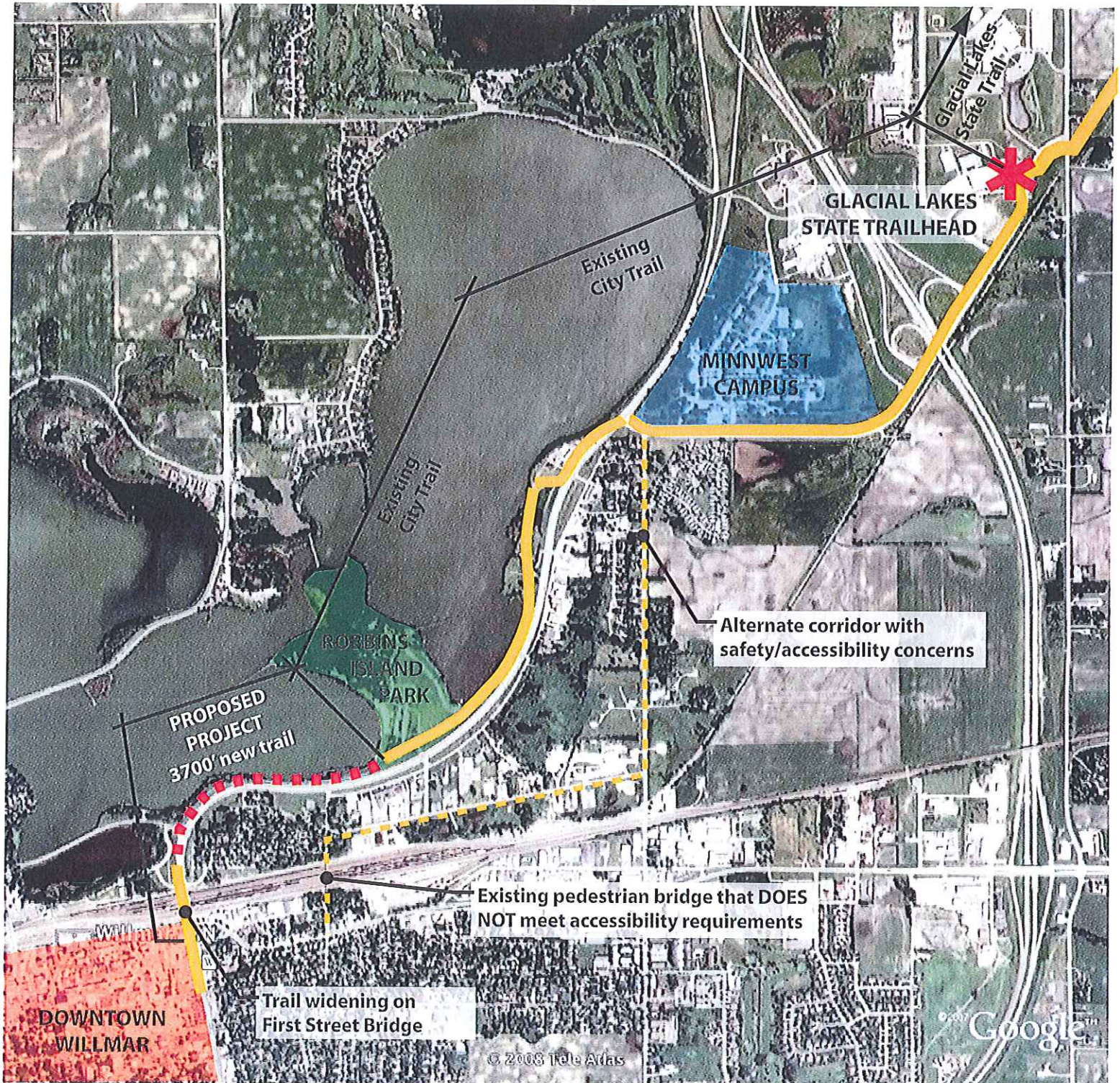
ATTACHMENTS

Map of Alternatives

Letter from the official with jurisdiction over the Section 4(f) property.

Mn/DOT's Cultural Resources Unit (CRU) letter for Historic/Archaeological determination.

Project Memorandum
Downtown-Robbins Island Connection, Willmar, MN
SP 175-090-05

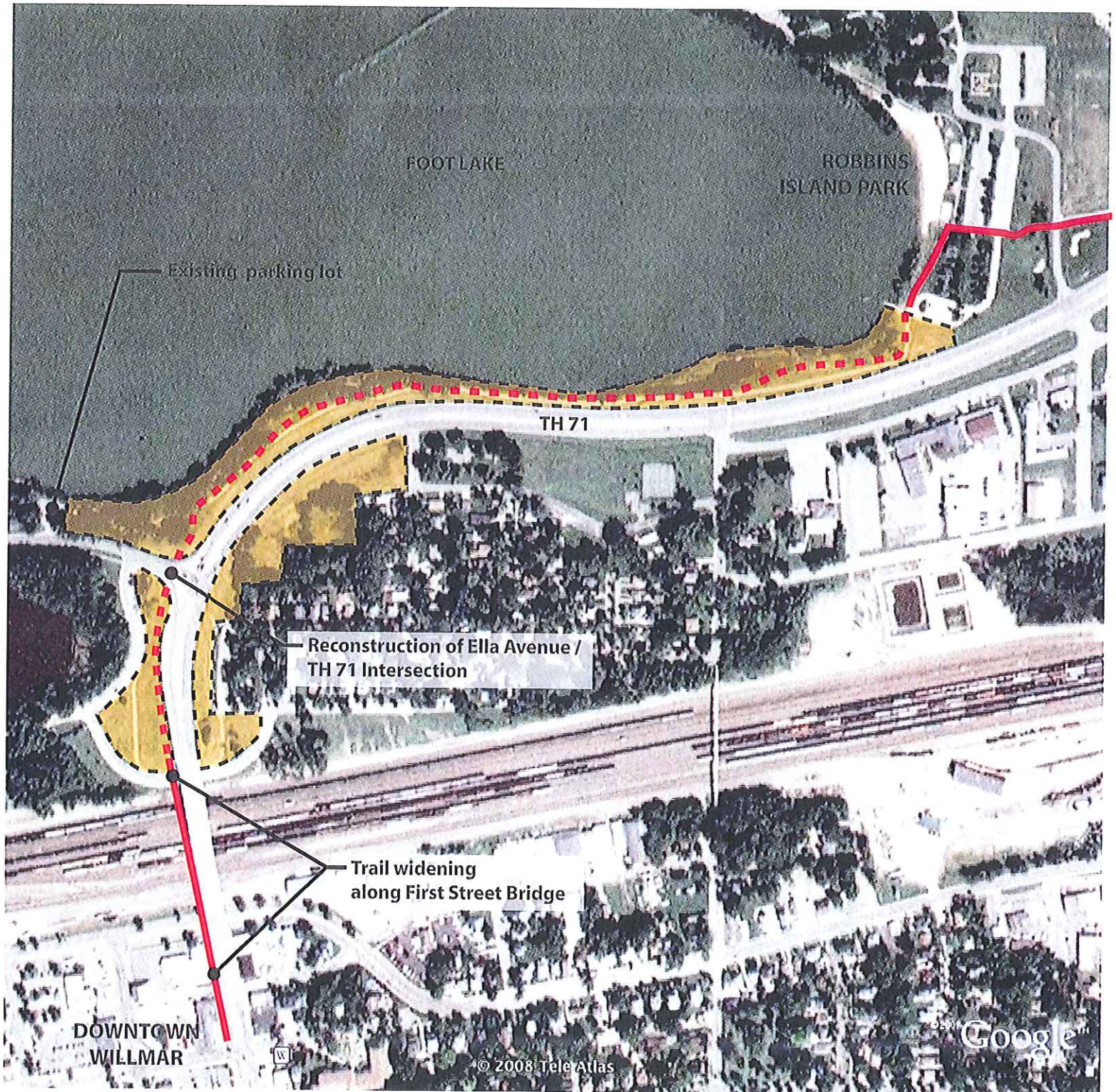


PROJECT CONTEXT and ALTERNATIVE

LEGEND

- ■ ■ ■ Proposed project
- Existing city/state trail/sidewalk
- - - - Planned city trail
- · · · Alternate trail route shown on some maps

Project Memorandum
Downtown-Robbins Island Connection, Willmar, MN
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LOCATION MAP

LEGEND

- ■ ■ ■ Proposed 10' asphalt bike/ped trail
- Existing city trail
- ▭ Savanna restoration area



CITY ADMINISTRATOR

City Office Building
Box 755
Willmar, Minnesota 56201
320-235-4913
FAX: 320-235-4917
www.ci.willmar.mn.us

July 23, 2012

Adam Regn Arvidson
Treeline
4348 Nokomis Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55406

Re: S.P. 175-090-005 (Downtown – Robbins Island Connection Trail)


Dear Mr. Arvidson:

The implementation of the federal transportation enhancements program funded Robbins Island Trail in Willmar and will require the use of public park property. According to federal rules published March 12, 2008, as amended in 73 FR 13395, this project is allowed an exception from Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act of 1966, as amended. Paragraph 774.13, section (g) states that an exception is available for "Transportation enhancement projects and mitigation activities, where: (1) The use of the Section 4(f) property is solely for the purpose of preserving or enhancing an activity, feature, or attribute that qualifies the property for Section 4(f) protection; and (2) The official(s) with jurisdiction over the Section 4(f) resource agrees in writing to paragraph (g)(1) of this section."

City staff has reviewed the findings of the trail connection project for Robbins Island. The Robbins Island Trail is being constructed to enhance public access to, and the natural environment of the parks through which it passes, and also to link these parks to other park and trail resources within and beyond Willmar's city limits. Therefore, as the unit of government responsible for these parklands, the City of Willmar hereby does agree that the Robbins Island Trail warrants this exception and may be implemented as planned.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

CITY OF WILLMAR

Charlene Stevens
City Administrator

Enclosures





Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of Environmental Services
Mail Stop 620
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Office Tel: (651) 366-3604
Fax: (651) 366-3603

October 03, 2011

Adam Regn Arvidson
Treeline
4348 Nokomis Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55406

Re: S.P. 175-090-005 (Downtown-Robbins Island Connection Trail)
T119N R35 W Sects, 10, 11 & 15, Willmar, Kandiyohi County

Dear Mr. Arvidson:

We have reviewed the above-referenced undertaking pursuant to our FHWA-delegated responsibilities for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (36 CFR 800), and as per the terms of the 2005 Section 106 Programmatic Agreement between the FHWA and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.

The City of Willmar is planning to construct a 10-foot wide, non-motorized, bituminous trail to replace an existing trail in the same general location. The new trail will also augment a pedestrian crossing of a local street and add guardrail to an existing highway bridge to separate vehicular and non-motorized traffic. The work will occur within the TH 71 (First Street) right of way and within a city park. The project also includes the restoration of approximately 1.5 acres of native savanna within the highway right of way and the park. The project area of potential effects (APE) for cultural resources includes the new trail construction and savanna reconstruction limits. There are no known cultural resources within the project APE and the APE has low potential for containing unidentified and intact resources.

The finding of this office is that there will be **no historic properties affected** by the project as currently proposed. If the project scope changes, please provide our office with the revised information and we will conduct an additional review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth J. Abel'.

Elizabeth J. Abel
State Programs Administrator Coordinator
Cultural Resources Unit

cc: Joe Hudak, Mn/DOT CRU
Mn/DOT CRU Project File